



Bhagirathi



Newsletter of The Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

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Vedanta Conference Group Photograph

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VEDANTA CONFERENCE

Over a hundred scholars and participants gathered on the sprawling and secluded campus of UMass Dartmouth for 3 days (July 16-18, 2009) of discussion on the wisdom and meaning of Vedanta philosophy and practice.

The Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth hosted the 18th International Congress of Vedanta with the scholars coming from dozens of universities of different countries, including India, Israel, Canada, Croatia, Holland, and the United States.

The Congress opened in the Main Auditorium of the McLean Campus Center on Thursday, July 16, with the welcoming of delegates by UMass Dartmouth Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Anthony Garro. Dr. Garro, who also oversees the operations of the Center for Indic Studies, pointed out the need of global solutions to solve world problems and mentioned his own interest in Bhagavadgita in his college days.

Swami Yogatmananda of Providence Vedanta Society delivered the benediction highlighting how the Vedanta philosophy brought to the western world by Swami Vivekananda has made deep impressions in the American society.

The Congress covered such diverse topics as Consciousness, Ethics and Phenomenology, Modern Education and Ayurveda,

Yoga, and Vedanta and Science. In the opening speech, Dr. Jagdish Srivasatava emphasized on well-known work that exists to suggest that Vedanta, particularly as it explains consciousness, is verifiable with modern scientific advances in neuroscience.

For the past 23 years the Congress has been held at Miami University, but this year the Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth hosted the event. Professor Rama Rao Pappu, the Founder of Vedanta Congress, attended with his wife, Mrs. Suryakantham Pappu, who has played a critical role in the organization of the Vedanta Congress over the years.

Dr. Bal Ram Singh, Director of Indic Studies Center, introduced the center to the delegates and said, "the Vedanta Congress has rightly landed in the land of Emerson and Thoreau", the 19th century Vedantists who were the first Americans interested in this philosophy and were from New England and Massachusetts.

The Congress started with traditional shankhanaad (conch blowing) and lightening of the lamp, and Vedic chanting which lent an authentic ambience to the discussions on the many aspects of Vedanta and modern thinking and relevance.

The discussions were intellectually engaging and several speakers broke new ground or made efforts to revise traditional



thinking. Rajiv Malhotra of Infinity Foundation spoke on “The Forest Paradigm: Context vs. Universalism”, and pointed out that Indian philosophy must be accepted as a whole for it to be understood by western scholars, even if the latter group feels uncomfortable with certain aspects initially. Accepting the health benefits of yoga, but not its philosophical aspect is not likely to create appropriate understanding and practice of the philosophy.

Ashok Aklujkar, a prominent scholar of Sanskrit and philology from University of British Columbia presented a keynote address on Indian Philosophy before the earliest available texts: “Need for a Philology-based Revamping”, and urged his colleagues to go beyond the current textual philology approach in fixing a historical timeline for Indian civilization.

At a public lecture, Subramanian Swamy, the Janata Party president and a visiting professor at Harvard University, outlined the need to develop a holistic system for the society’s development based on values. “Indians need to feel proud of their civilization and Vedanta’s acceptance worldwide can make that process easier.”



Shankhanaad (conch blowing)



Lighting of the Lamp



In order from top to bottom:
Dr. Anthony Garro, Provost
Swami Yogatmananda of Providence Vedanta Society
Professor Rama Rao Pappu



Dr. Subramanian Swamy released a book entitled “The Salem-India Story: Maritime Trade between Salem, Massachusetts, and India 1788-1845” written by Dr. Vanita Shastri of Meru Education Foundation. The book traces trade between a newly independent United States and India, and is written as a supplementary resource for American school children.

At a brief ceremony during the Congress on July 18 the Light on Ayurveda Education Foundation (LOAF), Center for Indic Studies at UMass Dartmouth, and the 3 R’s Foundation, signed a memorandum of understanding to transfer the responsibility for publishing “Light on Ayurveda Journal” (LOAJ) to the Center for Indic Studies. LOAJ is currently the only peer Ayurveda journal serving many Ayurvedic practitioners and institutions in United States.

The ceremony involved 3-way signing by Provost Garro and Dr. Singh (representing UMass Dartmouth), Genevieve Ryder and Robert Ryder (representing LOAEF and LOAJ), and Pandit Ramsamooj (3 R’s Foundation) to facilitate LOAJ publication by UMass Dartmouth, and transferring LOAEF to 3 R’s Foundation.

Vedanta Congress had several presentations on Ayurveda, including some by students who traveled all the way from India. In fact, this Vedanta Congress had the most visible student presence with about 10 students participating, the majority of whom were from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi.

A musical program organized by doctoral student Koyel Ghosal, who played sitar accompanied by Christopher Pereji on Tabla. Vocalist Supriya Kulkarni and Kathak dancer Rajani Kaimal entertained the delegates with their performance while explaining the human connection to art.

The Vedanta Congress will be an annual event now at UMass Dartmouth. Next year’s Congress will take place on July 28-31, 2010



Books on philosophy and simple living on display and for sale.

PATANJALI LECTURE SERIES 5

As a part of the ongoing Patanjali Lecture series, we had Dr. K Ramakrishna Rao amongst us to deliver a lecture on “Indian Psychology: Consciousness, Mind and Body: The Trident Model of the Person”. Dr. Rao shared with us a deep explanation of what consciousness, mind, and body are all about from the perspective of Indian psychology.

Human beings are potentially perfect, but existentially imperfect. Perfection consists in knowing truth and living truth, which is a state of absolute bliss. Evolution is a process of moving toward perfection. Evolution is both biological and psychic. Biological evolution reaches its apex with the development of mind as an instrument to access the world and interact with it. The climactic state of the biological mind consists in highly evolved sensory-motor and neuro-cortical systems organized around the ego, the empirical self. Biological mind is capable of cognitive excellence without the corresponding excellence in being and thus falls short of reaching the goal of perfection. Perfection needs excellence in being as well. Psychic evolution of the mind, which consists of the wholesome transformation of the person leads to excellence in being. It consists of the development of psychic mind, which is two-pronged. First, it involves progressive control of the biological mind and its functions to the point of their total suppression. Second, with the voluntary closing of the doors of perception and the shutting out of the channels of thought, reason, and logic, the windows of intuition can open. Consciousness shines through the windows of intuition to give the psychic mind totally transparent truth to completely transform the person toward perfection in knowing and being.

This in brief is the BMC model. The person is the composite of body-mind-consciousness. The mind is the central instrument connected with the body on one side and open to consciousness on the other side. The body-mind connection may be seen as the biological mind; and the mind exposed to consciousness is the psychic mind. The biological mind is cognitive, fed with sensory inputs playing in the field filled with images of fantasy and conceptual abstractions and guided by rules of convention and the tools of reason and logic. It is analytical and divisive in that it understands by comparing and contrasting. It is self-serving. The contents of the cognitive mind are painted in sensory images and as such, they represent, but do not reveal reality. The psychic mind is intuitive and able to access consciousness, its effects are transformational and it is unbounded by the ego. It is synthetic in that it is unifying rather than dividing. It reveals reality as such; therefore its truths are self-certifying and infallible.

The mind is thus endowed with two ways of knowing. Biological evolution involved with knowing by sensing and reason. Psychic evolution involved with the flowering of consciousness in one’s being by the flowing of intuitive knowing. Humans are capable of both kinds of knowing, even though with the develop-



ment of the lower mind they become almost wholly dependent on sensory knowing sharpened by logic and reasoning. With the development of the higher mind, intuition takes the center stage.

Consciousness is the principle of universal gnosis. It is undifferentiated subjectivity, the base of all knowledge. It is not limited to reportable awareness, the primary, introspectable awareness, which arises from the mind in its association with the brain and consciousness. As the universal knowledge principle, consciousness relates to all material things with different levels of complexity, whether gross like mountains or subtle like minds. Whether consciousness is ultimately one single entity or organized into various centers to function individually is more a metaphysical matter than a psychological assumption. For example, Yoga, unlike Vedanta, conceives consciousness as consisting of multiple centers called purusas. In as much as all purusas are alike with no individually distinguishable characteristics, qualities, or attributes we may interpret purusa as consciousness centered around or enveloping the person. Subjectivity of consciousness refers to its meaning giving function. In its association with consciousness, a physical thing gains its meaning. In the human condition, in association with the ego of the person, it engenders self-awareness.

The body in the human context is the evolved physical system with its brain and associated support structures. It is the instrument through which the mind interacts with other physical systems. It is indispensable for cognitive awareness and is essentially irrelevant to intuition. At the cognitive level, body-mind interaction gives rise to psycho-physical states called vrittis. Vrittis illumined by consciousness result in primary awareness. Those unable to reflect consciousness because of cortical conditions or psychological factors remain as unconscious states that could influence the person without overt awareness. Multiple per-



Dr. Ramakrishna Rao together with Dr. Bal Ram Singh and Jerry Solfvin, Center for Indic Studies

sonality manifestations suggest the organization of consciousness in multiple centers within the same body.

Body-mind connection gives rise to transactional awareness. Mind-consciousness connection in the intuitive mode that influences bodily states gives rise to transcognitive awareness, which is behind parapsychological phenomena. Accessing consciousness-as-such by the person without coloring and filtering by the body and the mind is transcendental awareness of the kind claimed by the mystics.

The question of survival of bodily death does not refer to consciousness, but to the mind. Consciousness has no birth or death. It neither rises nor sets. The mind, however, admits the possibility of surviving the disintegration of the body because it is conceived to be distinct from the body. It is assumed that the physical subtlety of the mind assures its non-physical survival. The mind's decay does not covary with the decay of the body. The mind disintegrates by its own effort to return to its primordial material state in prakriti. If there is evidence for reincarnation, it is the evidence for the continuity of mind beyond one body.

To conclude, the person is the composite of body-mind complex capable of reflecting consciousness. The person's existential quest is to know truth (satyam) to do good (ivam) and enjoy beauty (sundaram). When the goal is reached her being (sat) beaming knowledge (cit) basks in undiluted bliss (nanda).

K. Ramakrishna Rao currently chairs the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, and is the Founding President/Director of the Institute for Human Science & Service. Professor Rao earned two doctorates (philosophy & psychology) from Andhra University in India. He was a Fulbright Scholar at University of Chicago, a Fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation, and a Fellow at Duke University. He taught at Andhra University, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and University of North Carolina. He has published more than 200 research papers and 12 books, including *Handbook of Indian Psychology* (edited with Paranjape & Dalal, Foundation Books, 2008), *Towards a Spiritual Psychology* (edited with S.B. Marwaha, Samvad Books, 2005), and *Consciousness Studies: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (McFarland, 2002).



FORGING HUMAN UNITY: VEDANTIC PERSPECTIVE OF HINDU (SANATHANA) DHARMA

The speaker, Dr. Chandrasekhar Mayanil, began his lecture by sharing the key words Vedanata, Sanathana, Dharma and Human unity in relevance to their purpose, the essence of the entire seminar. "These words will make sense only once one's purpose is known, i.e. the higher purpose" as spoken by Chandrasekhar. We are pursuing the same thing irrespective of what or where we belong. Universally, man and ant are looking for the same thing.

How do we know if that particular thing is happiness and is that what we are looking for? What is the reason that man wants to be happy? No matter what you do, the one common outcome is that we all need and want to be happy. In reality, we are seeking that happiness in finite objects that can not provide infinite happiness. As human beings, we are seeking infinite happiness but we are not seeking it in the right place.

Dr. Mayanil shared an anecdote about a fictitious character in Sufism known as Mulla Nasrudeen who had an unconventional way of teaching his students. One day Mullaji was eating a bowl of red hot peppers one after another. The chili peppers caused Mullaji to sweat profusely and turned his eyes and ears bright red. On being questioned by his student as to why he was consuming the red hot peppers one after another in spite of knowing the outcome, this is what Mullaji had to say; "I am eating all of them in order to find that one sweet pepper." The anecdote was analogous to the way humans seek infinite happiness in the wrong places but still hope to find happiness in the non-essential. The non-essential being incomplete, it cannot provide the infinite happiness that we are seeking. This is how we seek happiness in the wrong places.

Many of us do not know the reason why we are seeking happiness. Vedanta confirms that we are seeking happiness because this is our essential nature. We are constantly seeking happiness because that is where we have come from, what we are made of it, and thus is the very essence of Vedanta.

Our purpose is to find that infinite happiness. Beyond and higher, there exists nothing. Vedanta tells us that we are 'that'. The term 'that' refers to sat chit anand. Sat is that which remains unchanged always. Sat chit is that which is within us and anand is what we are seeking. When we say 'I am,' it is constant in everything. The 'I' is the Sat, and 'Am' is the Chit and the awareness is that 'I am'. The awareness of the 'I' is the 'am' and so Sat chit anand is 'I am happy'.

Dr. Mayanil further elaborated on what Vedanta is all about. Vedanta being the final and last teachings of the Vedas; has four cardinal principles: 1. Non Duality of Absolute Truth, 2. Divinity of Soul, 3. Oneness in existence and 4. Harmony of religions. The essential teaching of Vedanta is Yoga. Yoga, a way to the liberation of the individual soul through self-knowledge is of



Dr. Bal Ram Singh together with Chandrasekhar Mayanil ready to share the Vedantic perspective of Hindu dharma

four types: 1. Janana Yoga: enquiry, reason, logic, 2. Bhakti Yoga: removes Impurity through prayer, self surrender to the divine self, 3. Karma Yoga: Selfless service causes annihilation of the EGO which causes restlessness, 4. Raja Yoga: posture, breathing, mind control by willpower.

Essentially, through the system of Yoga, Vedanta addresses several questions, such as, what is Absolute Reality, what is Relative reality, and what is the relationship between Absolute and Relative reality? How do we get out of the bondage of Relative Reality and experience Absolute Reality? Vedanta upholds spiritual democracy, promotes spiritual humanism, and provides a basis for world unity.

Lastly, Dr. Mayanil explained that from the core of sat chit anand, anything that unifies is a substratum and anything that makes you stray from this core is adharma and anything that makes you remain in this core is dharma. Dr. Mayanil spoke about annihilation and losing one's being, by citing an example of the wave that is determined to be on a mountain top, where it will dry and lose its personality. He further reiterated that Sat, being the truth of your nature, is defined by eternity. Since we take a position that cannot be eternity, and hence we cannot be in that infinity, from that point of view, the example of the wave and the ocean was best explained.

In conclusion, he summarizes Sanatana by defining it in the following ways: 1. That which exists at all times and never changes; 2. That which is not born and therefore does not die; 3. That which exists in all states of consciousness; 4. That which is unlimited and present at all times; 5. That which does not have any name or form; 6. That which is free from all conditionings and is therefore free; 7. That which is Natural/Enduring and Dharma being the essential essence of all beings, a substratum and support for everything; the unifying principle. For e.g. the very nature, harmony, the way, righteousness, compassion, natural Law, essential



Nature, morality, truth, teachings, tradition, philosophy, order, flow, spirituality, religion, wisdom, purest insight, divine conformity, cosmic norm, inherent nature, and intrinsic nature.

Everybody is on that pursuit to happiness and is conscious of this very existence i.e. pursuing happiness, sat chit anand. This knowledge of existence is fundamental to every being in this universe, even plants share the same. Doing anything that will strengthen the Sat chit anand in anybody is the ultimate dharma of all human beings.

Chandra Shekhar K. Mayanil, Ph.D., is Director of the Neural Tube Research Program, Children’s Memorial Research Center, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University (Chicago, IL). He was born and raised in India and studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi before coming to America. In Chicago he has been teaching Sanatana Dharma classes at Chinmaya Mission for the past 10 years.

WILL I BE RICH? WILL I BE
HAPPY? ON TEACHING ECONOM-
ICS AND HAPPINESS USING A
CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY

The economics of happiness is a subject Dr. Vaishali Mamgain has studied in the process of her fellowship. She shared her thoughts and insights on teaching her course on contemplative pedagogy by describing the course structure and the use of contemplative teaching techniques.

Vaishali started with this quote on Economics and Happiness. “The professed object of Dr. Adam Smith’s enquiry is the nature and the causes of the wealth of nations. There is another inquiry, perhaps, still more interesting, which he occasionally mixes with it; I mean an enquiry into the causes which affect the happiness of nations” Malthus, 1966.

Economists have been concerned about well being for some time. Adam Smith wrote about the peculiarly non-economic factors that go into the happiness, and neo-classical economics has focused material wealth as the determinant of happiness, especially in the last 50 years.

Mamgain developed her course in order to provide insight about the foundations of happiness in the 21st century. She wanted to present her theory of economics to the students in a way that would resonate with their lives rather than just give a presentation of traditional economics.

The course is approached in two different modalities: one

being a rigorous academic presentation, the other consisting of a focus on happiness by introducing neuropsychology and contemplative thinking.

The course focuses on: 1. academic studies, 2. contemplative exercises, student work, successes and challenges. “We clear away ignorance by cultivating wisdom, with the three wisdom tools, or the three prajnas: the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of contemplation and the wisdom of meditation.” The goal of the course, similar to the goal of Buddhism, is to integrate the three tools within the academic course material for the added benefit to the students.

“The point of doing anything in this life is to be truly in touch with oneself, and to move closer to the truth. However, if we are not quite in touch with ourselves our motivation could distort what we do.” Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche Lerab Ling, France, 2002.

The course syllabus is broken out into several areas of study: 1. Defining happiness—how philosophers, psychologists, and economists define happiness; 2. Methodology—how do we measure happiness. Is it 1st, 2nd, 3rd person and does that change the way we look at happiness; 3. Economists say happiness = f (Income, wealth, inflation, unemployment) to this: philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists add: Happiness = f (freedom, interpersonal relations, health, society, culture, altruism, ethics); 4. Focus on Relational goods/Inconspicuous Consumption; 5. Can we train ourselves to Be Happy; 6. The role of co-operation, altruism and ethics.

The students seemed to be unaware of meditation. All they understood of meditation was sitting cross-legged and chanting a few lines. Mamgain introduced them to meditation by quoting the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama says, “For example in its traditional context, the term for meditation is ‘bhavana’(in Sanskrit) or Gom (in Tibetan). The Sanskrit term connotes the idea of cultivation, such as cultivating a particular habit or a way of being, while the Tibetan term gom has the connotation of cultivating familiarity. So, briefly stated meditation in the traditional Buddhist context refers to a deliberate mental activity that involves cultivating familiarity, be it with a chosen object, a fact, a theme, habit, an outlook or a way of being.”

Based on this, Buddhism states there are two types of meditation. One is a stabilizing and quieting meditation, during which one tries to quiet the movement in the mind and the other is discursive meditation also known as analytical meditation, in which one meditates on impermanence. Stabilizing meditation is mindful meditation (watching one owns breath and counting to 21, for instance) and discursive meditation cultivates a loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. Moving back and forth between stabilizing meditation and discursive meditation involves practise and being involved with your own mind.

The Dalai Lama stated in a meeting in Washington DC, “ so it is critical to be aware of what specific forms of meditation one might be investigating when engaged in collaborative research so



Vaishali Mamgain sharing insights about the course she teaches ‘On teaching economics and happiness using a contemplative pedagogy’

that complexity of meditative practices being studied is matched by the sophistication of the scientific research.” The Dalai Lama 2005.

In Buddhism there are no 10 commandments given to the mind. Rather, one must consider what the mind is and what it makes you do. It is about mindfulness. Watch your mind and soon you will know the quality of your mind.

“Remember that a thought is only the fleeting conjunction of myriad factors and circumstances. It does not exist itself. When a thought arises, recognize it’s empty nature. It will immediately lose its power to elicit the next thought, and the chain of delusion will be broken...,” Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

On questioning “is happiness a reasonable goal,” one of Mamgain’s students said, “I think the first step to being able to choose between lower and higher pleasures is having an awareness, knowing that there are two different types of pleasures one must choose from. Then the next step would be to have a sense of true self and to be working towards excellence in your life,” J.R. 2007

Another said, “When you watch people, it becomes evident that their self absorption and distance from others has become their unnatural comfort zone,” D.P. 2007

Lastly, on writing letters of gratitude, Mamgain shared this

piece of contemplative writing by one of her students, “Giving or receiving promotes the same feeling of joy within your mind. I have always enjoyed expressing thanks or being generous, but have never evaluated, never directly examined the emotional similarity of giving and receiving,” J.C 2007.

Vaishali Mamgain, Ph.D., is an associate professor of Economics at the University of Southern Maine. Born and raised in India, she studied economics there (B.A., M.S.) and in America (Ph.D., University of North Carolina). In 2007, she was awarded a fellowship by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society for using contemplative practices in the classroom.



DR. MIOVIC EXAMINES SRI. AUROBIN-DO'S MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), a widely known spiritual teacher and a leading exponent of modern Indian philosophy, made seminal contributions to yoga philosophy and spiritual psychology, which underpin the current wave of interest in Indian spirituality and consciousness studies.

“The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain seperativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. Is it possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of seprative consciousness and become aware of the true Self, the divinity within us all.



Dr. Michael Miovic explaining to the general audience Sri. Aurobindo's model of consciousness

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient, and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of the release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. Only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it becomes possible for life to manifest perfection.”

Dr. Michael Miovic examined Sri Aurobindo's model of consciousness as a basis for a geospiritual understanding of planet Earth that links the seven chakras of classical yoga to the seven jewel centers in the Earth Mother. These



Sri Aurobindo

Jewel-Centers of the Earth Mother according to Dr. Miovic are seven luminous jewel hearts of Truth in Substance; but they have been imprisoned in darkness, fossilized in immobility, veiled, closed, shut into their own occult energies by the hardness, darkness and inertia of the material Inconscience.

To liberate all these powers by the luminous and flaming descent of the Suns of the Supermind and the release of the eighth Sun of Truth hidden in the Earth, in the darkness of the Inconscience, in the cavern of Vala and his Panis, this is the first step towards the restoration of the Earth Mother to her own divinity and the earth's existence to its native light, truth, life and bliss of immaculate Ananda.

The challenge of global warming may demand an inspiring, spiritual vision of the Earth, and the evolution of human consciousness, precisely what Sri Aurobindo envisioned for a brighter future.

Dr. Michael Miovic, Chief of the Adult Psychosocial Oncology program at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI), Boston, received his M.D. from the UC San Diego, trained in psychiatry at Harvard Longwood Program, and did a fellowship in Psycho-oncology at the DFCI. Dr. Miovic has a special interest in spiritual issues in mental health and has published case studies, articles, and chapters on that topic. He has collaborated with colleagues in the U.S. and in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, India, to help develop the field of integral psychology.



CELEBRATING 62 YEARS OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE AT UMASS DARTMOUTH

The Indian Student Association of UMass Dartmouth celebrated the 62nd Independence Day on 15 August, 2009. The celebrations commenced with a slide show that depicted the culture and heritage of India. The National Anthems of America and India were sung to show the peaceful coexistence and solidarity that exists between the two nations.

The eminent journalist and author Francois Gautier chaired the celebrations. Born in Paris in 1959, Francois Gautier began freelancing as a journalist in India in the early eighties, eventually becoming the correspondent in South Asia for the Geneva-based “Journal de Geneve”, one of the best international newspapers in Europe at that time.

Gautier has written several books such as, “Un autre Regard sur l'Inde” (Editions du Tricorne, Geneva-Paris), “A Western journalist on India” (Har Anand, 2001), “India's Self Denial” (Editions Auroville Press, 2001), “Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a Guru of Joy” (India Today Book Club, 2003; 11 reprints, 30,000 copies sold).

He is now the editor in chief of the Paris-based “La Revue de l'Inde” and a director of a book collection on India with the same publisher. Francois, along with his wife Namrita, is also the trustee founder of FACT – India, which does exhibitions and commissions films documenting Human Rights abuse in South Asia.

Francois Gautier is passionate about India. His love affair with the country began in the '70s, when as a young student, he left his native France and meandered across Europe and arrived in India.

During the last three decades, he has been a high-profile ambassador to India through the power of his pen. “It is a wonderful privilege to be born an Indian,” said Gautier. “I'm a westerner but I feel it is a privilege to live in India.” For Gautier, the epiphany came upon him when he started research on a book he was writing. He found that history books carried misinformation such as references to the Aryan invasion that have since been found to be fictional.

“India has been largely maligned by distorted information and misrepresentation. No records or schoolbooks have a correct account of the Hindu



Kush genocide, where millions were slaughtered. Exactly how many were killed isn't known but that was India's holocaust. Yet everyone knows about the Jewish Holocaust,” said Gautier. “India's history, falsely propagated by the British, Christian missionaries, and western media, has made me realize that we need to show Hindu civilization in its correct and true context. For the sake of our children and the generations to come, and the world!”

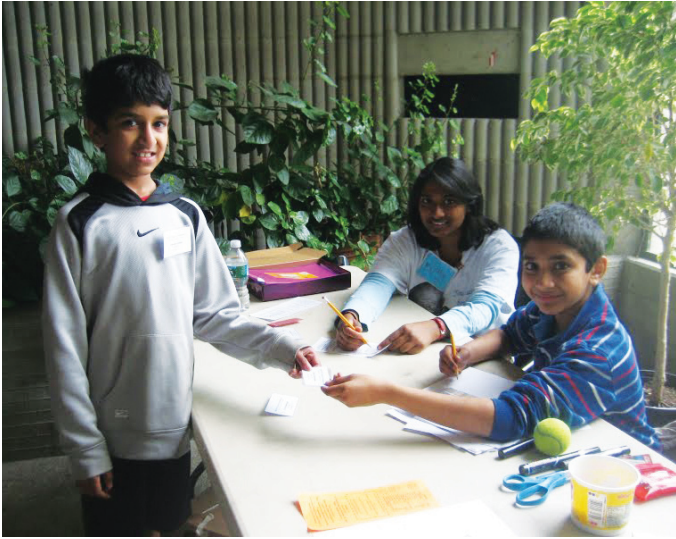
Gautier, commenting on the disunity among Hindu community leaders, said, “If there's fighting amongst ourselves, how do we present a united front to the world? After all this time that Indians have been in the US and enjoy great prosperity, they still do not have a voice that is heard. Yet other communities work together and in that unity, they find a voice. Indian organizations need to share a



common agenda and work towards that.”

He confided that it is “tragic” that the children of Indian immigrants adopt the American way of life and are lost to India.

“They’re hostile to spirituality. And it’s mostly the fault of the parents who either don’t care, or don’t instill cultural pride in their children. Families are fragmented, values lost.” Gautier urged young people to be proud of their cultural heritage. “It is a privilege and a responsibility to have Indian roots and there is no contradiction here—you hail from the lineage of the Vedas. People are moving forward and coming to Hinduism for spiritual answers,” he said.



“BEE A BUSY BEE” NORTH SOUTH FOUNDATION

North South Foundation (NSF) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization whose primary mission is to provide college scholarships to underprivileged children in India. Since 1989, NSF has been raising funds in the US by holding regional and national educational contests to get Indian American children engaged and motivated in education.

This effort has blossomed over the years and now encompass 6 different types of Bees (spelling, vocabulary, math, geography, essay writing, and public speaking), 70 centers across the US, over 1000 volunteers and 8,300 contestants. Several of the contestants have gone on to be serious contenders in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, the National Geography Bee, the National Vocabulary Championship, Math Counts and other national contests.

In April 2008, the Cambridge Chapter of NSF conducted Regional Educational Contests at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, co-sponsored by the Center for Indic Studies. At this event, Math and Spelling Bees were conducted for children of various age groups ranging from Kindergarteners to 9th graders.



The busy Bees at work





GLIMPSES OF 'HOLI' IN UMASS DARTMOUTH

Holi (also called Holaka or Phagwa) is an annual festival celebrated on the day after the full moon in the Hindu month of Phalguna (early March). It celebrates spring, commemorates various events in Hindu mythology and is time of disregarding social norms and indulging in general merrymaking.

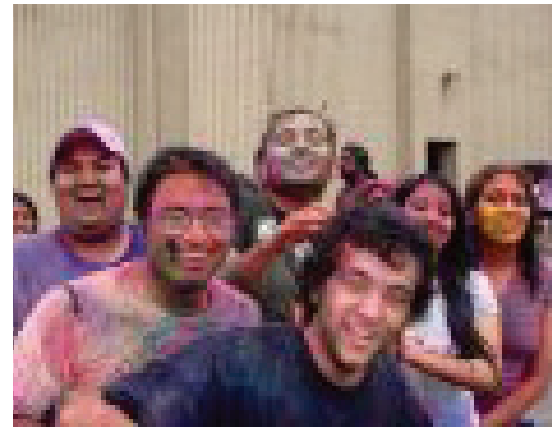
During Holi, Hindus attend a public bonfire and spray friends and family with colored powders and water.

Celebrated all over India since ancient times, Holi's precise form and purpose display great variety. Originally, Holi was an agricultural festival celebrating the arrival of spring. This aspect still plays a significant part in the festival in the form of the colored powders: Holi is a time when man and nature alike throw off the gloom of winter and rejoice in the colors and liveliness of spring.

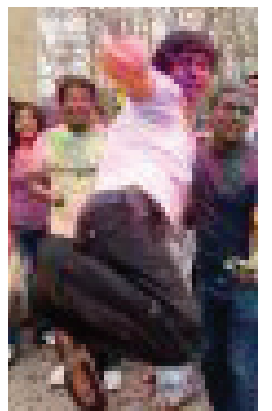
Holi also commemorates various events in the Hindu mythology, foremost being one that involves an evil king named Hiranyakashipu. This king forbade his son Prahlad from worshipping Vishnu, but Prahlad continued to do offer prayers to the god. Angry with his son, Hiranyakashipu challenged Prahlad to sit on a pyre with his wicked aunt Holika who was believed to be immune to fire. (In an alternate version, Holika put herself and Prahlad on the fire on orders from her brother.) Prahlad accepted the challenge and prayed to Vishnu to keep him safe. When the fire started, everyone watched in amazement as Holika was burnt to death, while Prahlad survived without a scar to show for it. The burning of Holika is celebrated as Holi. According to some accounts, Holika begged Prahlad for forgiveness before her demise, and he decreed that she would be remembered every year at Holi.



UMass Dartmouth Indian Student Association celebrating 'Holi' and colored from head to toe.



One ritual of Holi is the smearing of this powder on each other.





GUEST ARTICLE
INDIAN ETHOS IN AMERICAN
UNIVERSITIES

by Swami Yogatmananda

“Namaste” I heard, as I was standing at a North Carolina airport security-check to walk through the metal detector. A white American TSA officer was saying this to me with folded hands, gesturing me to walk through. I have experienced this at various American airports over the years.

This is of course, only a symbolic indication of how much this country is getting used to the people and culture of India. Doctors, scientists, teachers-professors, engineers, hotel-owners and other professionals have been gradually settling in India over the last 60 years. From the late eighties a large number of computer and IT-techies ushered in an influx of Indians. Indian restaurants, grocery stores, Hindu temples, Indian cultural centers have become a common sight now. Popular TV channels not only show programs about Indian history, culture, politics etc., but many news-readers, reporters, expert analysts and commentators seen on TV are of Indian descent. The universities, especially the graduate schools, have a significant Indian presence.

There has been a fast-growing and wide-spread interest in studying India. It is surprising to see a number of Americans opting to study Hindi, Sanskrit, Indian music, dance, medicine, Hatha-yoga and Hinduism—not just out of idle curiosity, but due to serious, genuine interest. There are various reasons for this increasing interest: Indian Democracy, unmatched history of peaceful co-existence of various religions, over 20 main languages, unbroken cultural continuity over thousands of years, scientific and technological development and rising economy, and of course, spiritual and meditative practices in India, to name a few. Then there is the outsourcing! ‘Money makes the world go round!’ Throughout the history of the world, commercial interests have been an important driving force that brought about the exchange of culture along with exchange of money and goods. Indo-American cultural exchange got a fresh and strong boost from the sharing of commercial interests. Expert services which the US needed could be found in India at a far cheaper prices. Enthusiastic, dollar-hungry entrepreneurs on both sides jumped to harness this potential and as a by product, the cultural exchanges became deeper more quickly.

Some US Universities had faculty members or other connected people who took initiatives to disseminate the awareness of India in the University circles. While these efforts are praiseworthy and in many cases created a wide and sustained impact, they were not officially a part of the University. The Center for Indic Studies (CIS) at UMass Dartmouth, is unique in that respect. It is formally a part of the University, not some activity undertaken unofficially or informally. This gives the Center very special advantages and at the same time, an arduous responsibility goes with it. It gets

solid organizational backing, ready infra-structure, advertising and outreaching facilities, a good number of teachers and students to volunteer, and also a lot of prestige. The leadership mantle can pass from one person to another smoothly, assuring continuity of the work even if someone moves on. Being part of the university, a high standard of intellectual interaction is easier to maintain. Also, the codes and norms of the university-activities automatically control the negative/fanatic/closed-mind tendencies, and thus the exchange of ideas can be achieved in a mutually beneficial way, more so than in organizations which are run at personal/individual level, influenced by the whims and fancies of individuals. Along with the advantages is the responsibility to conduct the activities at the high level, qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

The ‘Mission Statement’ of the CIS says, “Beginning with the time of Indus Valley, Civilization, one of the oldest civilizations on earth, contribution of India to the rest of the world has been substantial in many fields, including but not limited to spiritualism, philosophy, language, science, mathematics, astronomy, statecraft, etc. CIS will strive to highlight these and will also promote studies on issues germane to contemporary Indian society and their relevance to evolving multi-cultural global society.”

During the last 7-8 years, (that I got to see the work of the Center) it has steadily increased its activities touching all different aspects of Indian life, thus fulfilling the ‘Mission Statement’. Patanjali Lecture-series, yearly summer-conferences, workshops on Ayurveda, Indian music-concerts, all these programs indicate the high level of commitment and tremendous efforts put in by Center Director, Dr Bal Ram Singh and his team. Remember, all of them are working for CIS out of the love for Indian ethos while also being extremely busy in the demanding academic work at the UMass Dartmouth. Some of the very significant developments during the last couple of years have been:

- A. The project to start the super accelerated learning-techniques (SALT) from the Vedas, for which a large endowment was received.
- B. Taking up the yearly hosting on campus of the International Vedanta Congress.

A University is like the head of the whole society. Just as when a person has an idea and expresses it through his/her whole body, so also as the Indian cultural values find a similar path in the Universities and become vibrant in the whole society. These values provide the meaning of life for all of us humans and are therefore greatly needed for the peaceful and cooperative existence of mankind. It is so important for other universities to emulate UMass Dartmouth. Interestingly, right now, the University of Rhode Island is observing a full semester with special weekly programs titled ‘Demystifying India’. These programs involve well known international authorities. Brown University is also observing this year (2009-2010) as ‘The Year of India’.

Swami Yogatmananda is the resident minister of the Vedanta Society of Providence, RI, a branch of the Ramakrishna order of India. He is also the Hindu Chaplain at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth since 2007 and a key supporter of the Center



Since its founding in 2001. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the Center for Indic Studies.



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